Aint I A Woman?

A MIDWEST NEWSPAPER OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION 25¢

PUBLISHED BY THE AIAW COLLECTIVE IOWA CITY, IOWA

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FINDING DIRECTION

WHERE WE'VE COME FROM

We've been publishing Ain't I a Woman? for over a year now and we've gone through all the heavy changes that anyone goes through in that length of time -- only at least multiplied by ten. Most of the year we've been a steady, tight collective. In general, new members have been few and many of us have been members from the start of the paper. Now half of the members have just recently joined and many of the women who started Ain't I a Woman? have left. Just as each new member adds something, each older member who has left took something with her -- what she added to the collective and what all of us had become so used to. That's been hard to adjust to. In addition to the changes in the collective all of us have been going through upheavals in our personal lives, changes in living situations, jobs, etc. Some of us are feeling burned out and unsure of what we should be doing politically. Some of us don't feel capable at this point of doing anything. But some of us still hold on to a hope that we can struggle through to some path of action.

We've dealt with a lot of issues and have been able to come to some resolutions. One of our first struggles was over gayness. In the beginning of the collective gay women were in the minority. But even though we weren't all gay we were resolved about thinking in terms of that perspective. It wasn't much of a hassle to decide to come to grips with it because the importance of dealing with gayness was recognized early. Gradually over the year the population of the collective has become almost all gay. This was a result of: 1. Three new members being gay, 2. Three members realizing they were gay or choosing against their heterosexual relationships, 3. Two straight women having to move away from Iowa City because of job location changes of the males they related to. This evolution has been slow and natural and never occurred as a result of internal problems or gay/straight disagreements.

The evolution of issues we've dealt with has had, we think, a pattern. Gayness came first and, although it was an arduous struggle, we feel it was relatively easier to deal with than the struggles we're involved with now, specifically class and race, for two reasons. First, Women's Liberation as a whole had been dealing with gayness, at least marginally, for some time. Second, any woman can choose to be gay, and women working on raising their consciousness naturally have to consider that possibility in themselves and come to an understanding of it. But coming to a place where we are trying to deal with class and race -- which no one has a choice over as far as their backgrounds are concerned -- has been a slower and more painful process. There have always been class differences within the collective and we have always struggled over that even though we didn't always realize (or admit) the class nature of those differences. Recently we have been really consciously trying to deal with class, but the number of working class women in the collective has decreased and with the possibility of two women moving, AIAW may soon be composed of all middle class women. We're concerned about our ability to deal with class if that happens -- and we feel convinced that it is economic class that the women's movement must deal with.

Our reaction to the Attica action is a really telling example of that last point. It is the one thing, national or local, that has occupied our minds and excited us politically in quite some time. The fact that the Attica rebellion doesn't have much directly to do with the women's movement, and the ways it has forced us to think about the class and race nature of that action, has made us question our distance from that level of struggle and think about being white.

So what is occupying our minds now seems to indicate a lot about the probable direction of AIAW. We've been trying to talk about the direction we should be going -- what the paper should be doing -- but we haven't come up with any answers; we've only started to clarify to ourselves the things we're concerned with and the problems we forsee.

The excitement of earlier beginnings has ended in some ways. None of us lives collectively any more and some of us feel disillusioned and a sense of failure about that. We see the things we have been working on in the last two years in Women's Liberation and in more than a year of working on the paper as valid, yet at the same time none of our activities has led to anything -- any higher level of struggle. And we can't help thinking that all of our struggles with building a community -- struggling with our relationships, with gayness -- haven't done much to make a place for such a community to exist. We realize how easy it is to get involved in alternative culture and not remember that that is only one front of struggle and not sufficient by itself -- that most women can't afford those alternatives and that the failure we feel not being able to live the way we envision has a material basis; and it is material conditions that must be changed, not only the conditions within our own heads.

The papers and newsletters we get in seem to indicate that most groups are at about the same place as each other. Nothing new, nothing exciting. What a few years ago were exciting actions have become the status quo -- we feel starving for new directions.

A perfect example of earlier exciting actions becoming the status quo is Daycare. Free Daycare action started in Iowa City with the Dum-Dum Daycare Center, which set up parent-cooperative free daycare that would provide a way for women to be freed of 24 hour child care as well as a place for kids to relate unencumbered by the sex, race and class biases programmed into our society. They demanded, and got, housing from the University. Now there are four "free" daycare centers in operation, mostly white, mostly middle class. Early attempts to reach poor women didn't succeed, and no one has renewed efforts in that direction except one middle class women's church group which provides child care for poor women three mornings a week. It hasn't happened that people have struggled toward establishing feminist daycare, nor have the daycare centers yet come to much of a political consciousness.

The gay cell, which functioned for consciousness-raising and working out lesbian lifestyles for the women involved, no longer meets. The gay women's community is a large, unformed group whose members live pretty independently, coming together every couple of weeks for a party. (Note: at this writing some sort of new lesbian consciousness raising group is forming.)

Speaking about Women's Liberation to various groups or schools is expected now. It's something people do as a matter of course. That doesn't mean it's unimportant, but the newness has worn off and not much excitement is generated there. The same thing goes for new women's caucuses or consciousness-raising groups.

We've even come to expect the emergence of new women's newspapers and newsletters. Publishing has become the status quo!

The final example of the way the whole situation has changed relates to our mixed feelings about the newly-opened Women's Center in Iowa City. It's hard to get excited about because ideological splits are already so pronounced and real that the needed struggle seems overwhelming. We feel skeptical of the hope that characterized the birth of Women's Liberation in Iowa City two years ago because now we're all at so many different places in our heads. Times have changed. Many of us have dealt with gayness, many haven't; class antagonism is clear to some people, invisible to others. So forging unity means lots of energy, lots of apparent marking-time.

We're also concerned with the role we see the paper having. We have always engaged in self-criticism -- commenting on what we have been doing and actions elsewhere. That role seems less clear now. We're not sure who we are talking to -- or who's listening, and yet we feel women should be criticizing the direction of the movement especially in terms of class and race.

We will probably be struggling with the general problem of what we're doing and where we're going as a collective in an ongoing way, but wanted people to know what our feelings and concerns are at this point.

The following articles are statements by each member of the Ain't I a Woman? collective about her perceptions of the possible directions the paper can now take. We realize that there is some overlapping of ideas here, but it seemed important to us, as a collective, to formulate our thoughts individually from where we are now, and to give a sense of each of us, our differences and similarities.

I've been with AIAW from the beginning and now after two years of working in WL in Iowa City I feel really burned out. My life has been shook up lately and because the problems I generally face when things get really bad in my life are survival ones (food, shelter, money) I've been questioning what I should be doing politically. In the last 2 years I've struggled with community relationships, with coming out and working through my identity as a lesbian, and I've also really defined my politics through the analysis and discussion we've engaged in putting out the paper.

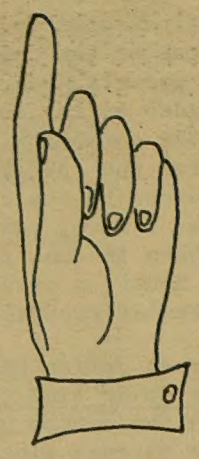
These things have all been valid and important to me and I know that a lot of what's getting me down is a certain relationship having ended. Still it's the survival problems that make all the rest so hard to handle. So I've been thinking that what I need must be fought for and that the only radical struggle is the one that will end the imperialist and capitalist system in this country and begin to equally distribute wealth and make retribution to the rest of the world.

That struggle I know will have to be an armed one and perhaps we would all die. I am constantly thinking of Attica. So basically I'm feeling frustrated that revolution seems so out of sight, and I'm unsure of what more I have to say as far as publishing a paper.

I'm also thrown by the dichotomy of being a lesbian who is beginning to see things in terms of a class struggle - who wants some material change so desperately- who perhaps would sacrifice much at this point for even minimal socialism.

I'm not sure that class can be dealt with in the womens movement and I'm less sure that AIAW can display much class consciousness, can struggle adequately with that, especially if the two of us who are working class move away.

In spite of all this I see little hope of struggling with class anywhere **else** and still feel that a paper engaged in self-criticism is important. So even though I feel hopeless about succeeding as far as class goes within the womens movement, I feel more hopeless about dealing with it anywhere else.



Before we can talk about direction, AIAW must come to grips with several questions concerning class.

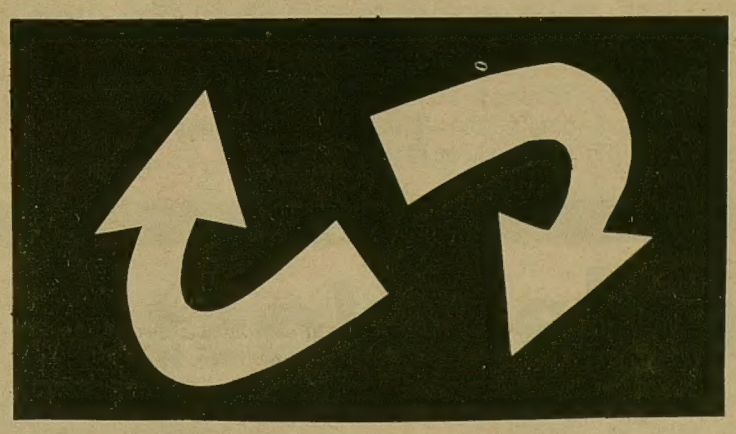
1. How can a collective of all middle class women deal with class?
2. If we decide that we as middle class women can not speak to the issue of class in the Women's Movement, but still believe that it's a crucial issue and that without class consciousness any analysis we'd come up with would be meaningless, then the only politically correct thing to do would be to cease printing.

If we decide we can as middle class women relate to class, then we must determine how, in what ways middle class women can do anything. One direction then we can take is to go more into theory -- like political economy . But here again there is the danger of any analysis we come up with not taking class into account enough.

The only way we can personally write about class is from a middle class perspective. This may be helpful to middle class women dealing with class, but I don't know how long it would be a valid way of dealing with class.

When laboring under the possibility of finding that white middle class women cannot put out a paper that adequately deals with all women, it is difficult to talk about the direction AIAW will take. Unfortunately I feel that AIAW will be a middle class paper, read by middle class women. I can hope that we as middle class women can raise our consciousness about class and race and speak to those women of their privileges and affect their behavior.

Women's Liberation cannot be a white middle class movement and hope to achieve an honest revolution. We must evaluate ourselves as white middle class people in the light of this while constantly trying to listen to working class and third world women -- not just when they're angry, but always. We can show ourselves dealing *with the problems of race and class and hope that working class and third world* women will tell us when we're full of shit, or on the wrong track.



I think this is a very crucial time both in the women's movement and in the life of this newspaper. We're becoming more and more aware of how middle class the women's movement is, not only in its people, but in so many of its liberal reformist demands. A strong class analysis is going to be imperative if we are to be anything other than a movement to make women more comfortable in a capitalist nation. Even though I know we're all struggling to raise our class consciousness and change our lives, I don't know that we can trust our analysis of any situation if we're all from white, upper middle class backgrounds.

Once, in a meeting, we were saying how getting into the Women's Movement had changed our lives. When it came around to me i made all of us laugh cause i said "it's raised my standard of living." That was last fall. This time i don't think anyone will laugh. Our perspective on the standard of living of WL relates to pretty serious problems. Last year we could joke about our money. Class consciousness was a fuzzy, distant concept to me. I can't remember analyzing our lesbian community lifestyle in terms of economic class from that comfortable perspective.

Who we were speaking to then, i'm not sure. Now our priorities are more clear, and a lot of women don't want to deal with them. Those of us who are gay and working class had to deal with our lives; from there we began to see women, people we wanted to trust, refusing to take us seriously. Gay sisters were together and this collective had never been unserious about lesbianism. We identified collectively with radical lesbian politics. Our first realizations about class antagonism were from events outside the working collective; it really started to be clear through the collective living and daycare struggles and in public speaking to outside groups. I think we knew it would be hard to begin dealing with class chauvinism in our collective because of the togetherness we had built up. Like i felt how can i tell women who helped me come out that they don't know what i'm feeling, they're oppressive. But that's not a valid reason for avoiding confrontation and it became more and more uptight. It was a coming out of a kind for some of us who had working class backgrounds but had been absorbed (partly) into a middle class lifestyle and identified very little with working class women in general. There were so few of us in the women's movement here....

It seems that the confusion we are experiencing as to our capabilities at political class analysis and direction as a collective was predictable some time ago. Therefore, our present attempt is good, I think, because we need to keep our goals, audience and political theory clear and in mind for every issue of the paper.

When we first discussed class (since I've been back) I didn't feel an immediacy or much identification. From listening to the discussions we've had, a more precise picture has come to focus to help determine class:

We mostly define our class by our class origin, or what class our parents belonged to. This seems valid to me since the argument that, "I've led a different lifestyle than my parents," is only saying that she had the option to do that--which is an option the lower class woman does not have. Because of this definition I am confused as to my class background, since my parents grew up and lived part of their lives in an isolated, religion-oriented, socialistic society.

The level of concern we feel for survival necessities also demarcates our class. By economic class lines it is obvious that money buys the life necessities and leaves the option for concern with purchasing automobiles, clothes, education, relief of liberal guilt through 'charitable' contributions, insurance against poverty from a 'disaster,' etc. Because of the communal equality standard, my parents never lacked a place to live (provided by the community) or food (provided by the community in way of a job guarantee after the '30's) or medical coverage (provided by the community). Yet economically, I have, and my parents have, always been in constant anxiety about lack of money, a pressure brought on by the influx of capitalism into our community.

Work as a necessity or an option has been suggested as a further guide line to determining class. Who has the option not to work? The woman whose parents give her money, clothes, education=financial security has that option, not the woman whose parents give her only non-material support to make it on her own. Since 14, I've never felt I could get by without working.

Values can not clearly identify class. Because of successful propaganda methods, status-symbol values permeate and are responded to in some way in all classes, therefore use of values doesn't seem totally accurate, except possibly to the extent with which they can be utilized by middle and upper class and not so much by lower class women. I've felt pressured to get an education (college--it's the only one recognized) but neither my parents nor I have money to pay for it. The wish my parents have expressed to me since I was very young is that I should find a secure job and work.

More honest discussion of class is necessary before I can feel that I understand even a few of the implications of class dynamics operating with counter-revolutionary impetus in relationships.

Besides class, I feel AIAW needs to deal with her communication effectiveness and audience.

What can I say that hasn't already been said about our committment to evolving a class consciousness in the AIAW collective and attempting to relate that to the women's movement, given our similar (middle class) background. It will be a hard struggle and we may find that our perspective is necessarily limited at some point. I hope when we get there we will be aware of it and be able to make the politically correct decision about what to do -- like stop publishing, or else realize what the limits of what we can deal with are.

The other hope I have is that we will be struggling to put what ever class consciousness we can achieve into some active practice, in AIAW of course but also in our personal lives and the ways we relate to WL projects such as the Women's Center. I see the responsibility of middle class women to point out what classism we are able to see as a real moral/political imperative both in our own lives and the work of others.

We have stated repeatedly that we know AIAW does not relate to third world women, and are acutely aware of the racist nature of that and the entire women's movement. Politically this appears to me to be the most difficult problem to deal with, let alone resolve. I know I have no answers myself, and we haven't really spoken to this problem in the paper.

Generally I have a lot of committment and energy to give to the life of this collective and newspaper.

When we critiqued the last issue, Rachel said that it seemed to her that most of the articles came from outside the collective like this ↘ AIAW ↙ . That's probably happened in other issues, but the last ↗ ↖ issue, in particular, seemed hard to get a hold on. I think it was hard to get in touch with the collective philosophy, or energy behind the paper because the collective itself was in a state of flux, with one member leaving and two more on leaves of absence.

It's the idea of collectivity that I want to focus on. Where is AIAW now? There's the old guard -- 6 experienced members, 2 of whom are leaving soon and another on a leave of absence, and 3 new members. And though we 3 had related to the collective before joining it, it's a whole new ball game to be in it and I think that's why I'm having such difficulty thinking about a direction for the paper. I think we have to determine what we are before we can go anywhere. My conception of collectivity is not to mold all of us into one brilliant thought process, but I just can't think about direction until I feel more comfortable/collective as a collective member.

Ways to feel that -- do more things as a collective (retreats; relating (reacting) to the Women's Center); some of this will come from shared tasks working on the paper and some will come from discussions at meetings. I think it's exciting actually. I'm not worried about it, just impatient.

Dilemma -- how to struggle with class without having Kate and Jody become resident working class women, thereby laying all our middle class guilts on them to gain absolution. There are some class topics that should be worked out among middle class members only. For instance: talking about our new classism revelations, "I did this most classist thing today...." We need to talk about our classism but I don't think we need to impose it on the working class women of the collective.

Facing Middle Class

Now that we've become aware of the fact that the women's movement has had a lot of middle class influences, it seems that we are going to have to deal with that hassle in material ways--not just talk about it, but consider class consciousness as a priority in what we write, the issues we take action on and in our lifestyles.

I've been thinking a lot about how to make myself more aware of what my white middle class background has done to me and how I can relate to a revolutionary women's movement in a constructive, serious way. Much of the present women's liberation movement remains a liberal reformist force that is trying to make middle class women as equal and as comfortable as possible in a capitalist country.

Those women who are seeing that a class struggle is essential to a feminist revolution are going to have to build the movement along strong class and anti-racist lines. It's difficult, at this point, to see exactly how white middle class women can do that. Hopefully we'll be able to ally and work with black and working class women to understand more of what needs to be done. But there will always be a question in my mind about whether those women will ever choose to work with us on any mass level. Because of the options middle class women have, the mistrust lower class women have is justifiable.

Mostly I've been trying to figure out how I could deal with being middle class now. Specifically, how I can live without exploiting other people by using my middle class privileges, but at the same time, using all the resources available to me and sharing them with the community. One thing that should be said is that we must be honest in confronting each other when we see classist behavior or attitudes.

Several years ago, as I started becoming aware of the shit that was coming down all over the world, I started rejecting the whole middle class trip. I quit college, stopped getting money from my parents and got temporary jobs to support myself. I went through a time of thinking that all straight jobs were worthless and counter-revolutionary. My rejection of training for any of those jobs was a really middle class decision.

It's absurd to reject a job that brings in money that can be used in good ways. On the other hand, I'm still into thinking about certain jobs and particularly, elitist professions, that can bring in a lot of money (law, medicine, etc.) but are so likely to co-opt you that they should be rejected. Also, there are some jobs that are so directly exploitative that they're beyond tolerance. (My last statement sounds a lot like, "I don't want to get my hands dirty," a choice a lot of people don't have.)

When people are earning more money than they need, then the excess money should be made available to people who need it. Exactly how this sharing can be done is still a big question. If the people with money can arbitrarily give it away, then they will still wield a great deal of power which is a bad situation. The money should be given to people and projects needing it most. It has to be made available in a way which will provide them with the most economic security (regular amounts of money that can be counted on) and the least strings attached. Hopefully, the decisions and arrangements can be made collectively by the community. It seems to me that defining the community is going to be one of the most difficult things to do.

As far as a more wide range perspective, I think we're going to have to carefully consider everything we write about and work on in the women's movement. We have to look at exactly what material benefits our actions and politics have for lower and working class people.

QUICK QUESTION TABLE

QUESTIONS	ADC AID TO DEP.CHIL.	OAA OLD AGE ASSIST.	AD AID TO DISABLD	AB AID TO BLIND	GENERAL RELIEF (COUNTY)	SOLDIERS RELIEF	FOOD STAMPS	COUNSELING
AGE--How old do I have to be?	18--or married, NOW or in PAST	At least 65	18 to 65	18 and older	Depends-local rules	Depends-local rules	Must be head of family	No age limits
RESIDENCY--Do I have to live in Ia.for a time	NO	NO	NO	NO	Likely-fight this!	Likely-fight this!	NO	NO
RELATIVES--Will they be contacted?	Probably-parents& Xhusband	YES	YES	YES	Some-times	Some-times	NO	Some-times
JOB--Can I have one & get money?	YES	YES	YES	YES	Maybe	Maybe	YES	YES
LIEN--Will welfare dep.put one on my home?	NO	YES	NO	NO	Maybe-fight this!	NO	NO	NO
SNOOPING--Will welfare dep.check on me?	They may try-dont let them	They may try	They may try	They may try	They may try	They may try	They may try	Some-times
EXTRA MONEY--Can I get for an emergency?	Should be able--Gen.Rel'f	Should be able to--G.R.	Should be able to--G.R.	Should be able to--G.R.	THIS is for EX-TRA help	THIS is for EX-TRA help	Should be able to--G.R.	Should be able to--G.R.
MOVE--& still get welfare $$$ & other help?	YES	YES	YES	YES	Should be able to	Should be able to	YES	YES
WORK--If I do will I lose welfare $$ & help?	Probably not ALL of it	Probably not ALL of it	Probably not ALL of it	Probably not ALL of it	Maybe will lose it	Maybe will lose it	Maybe not all Stamps	NO
PROPERTY--Can I own car & or house?	YES--within limits	YES--within limits	YES--within limits	YES--within limits	YES--within limits	YES--within limits	YES--within limits	YES--no limits
LIFE INSURANCE--How much can have?	$1,000 for each person	$500 single; $1,000 couple	$500 for a couple	$1,500 single; $2,000 couple	Depends-local rules	Depends-local rules	As much as you want	As much as you want
APPEALS-Can I question decisions about me?	YES!	YES!	YES!	YES!	You can TRY!	You can TRY!	YES!	YES!

QUICK QUESTION TABLE — CON'T.

QUESTIONS	ADC AID TO DEP.CHIL.	OAA OLD AGE ASSIST.	AD AID TO DISABLD	AB AID TO BLIND	GENERAL RELIEF (COUNTY)	SOLDIERS RELIEF	FOOD STAMPS	COUNSELING
WRO--Can I organize or join a Wel.Rights Org.?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
SPENDING MONEY--Can I do this the way I want?	YES	YES	YES	YES	May get "orders". Not $$$	May get "orders". Not $$$	Just for food	You do not get $$$ here
BOYFRIENDS AND GIRLFRIENDS--Can I have one?	YES	YES,if you are able to	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
SOCIAL SECURITY-If I get this, get welfare $ too	MAYBE--ask for ADC $$$	MAYBE--ask for OAA $$$	MAYBE--ask for AD $$$	MAYBE--ask for AB $$$	Some-times--TRY!	Some-times--TRY!	YES	YES
MEDICAL AND DENTAL CARE--Can I get this FREE?	YES	YES	YES	YES	SHOULD be able to	SHOULD be able to	You might	You might
DOCTORS EXAM.--Do I need one to get $$$ & help?	If BOTH parents are in the home	NO	Probably YES	MAYBE	NO	NO	NO	NO
GUARDIAN OR CONSERVATOR--If have,still get$$	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
WELFARE WORKERS-Are they specially trained?	NOT usually	NOT usually	NOT usually	NOT usually	NOT usually	NOT usually	NOT usually	Some-times
FEEL BAD--Should I if I get welfare $$$ or help	NO! YOU PAY TAXES	NO! YOU PAY TAXES	NO! YOU PAY TAXES	NO! YOU PAY TAXES	NO! YOU PAY TAXES	NO! YOU PAY TAXES	NO! YOU PAY TAXES	NO! YOU PAY TAXES
PERSONAL QUESTIONS--Do I have to answer?	NO-ONLY IF YOU WANT TO	NO-ONLY IF YOU WANT TO	NO-ONLY IF YOU WANT TO	NO-ONLY IF YOU WANT TO	NO-ONLY IF YOU WANT TO	NO-ONLY IF YOU WANT TO	NO-ONLY IF YOU WANT TO	NO-ONLY IF YOU WANT TO
SCHOOL LUNCHES-Can my kids get lunches FREE?	YES	IF your kids are in school	YES	YES	YES	YES	Probably	MAYBE--ask for them!
MONEY $$$--Will I get enough to live in dignity?	NO!	NO!	NO!	NO!	NO!	NO!	NO!	You DO NOT get $$$here

knowing your welfare rights

This chart is from the Welfare Rights Handbook for Aid to Dependent Children. Specifically, it is written for Iowa welfare recipients, but would be helpful as a general guide to welfare rights in all states. The handbook(92 pages) has information about medical care, child care, food stamps, your rights as an ADC recipient (right to privacy, to live with whom you choose) etc. There is a detailed chart explaining exactly how much money you or members of your family can earn without having your ADC check cut. Also included are directions for how to appeal if your funds are cut back or cut off completely. There's a lot more valuable information -- every person receiving welfare and everyone who thinks they need welfare should get a copy of this booklet. The cost is 15¢ a booklet.* They are available from:

Welfare Answering Service (W.A.S.)
Wartburg College
Waverly, Iowa 50677
Phone 319-352-1200 Extension 250
(between 9:00-5:00, Mbnday-Friday)

*$2 if you have money.

What I Did Last Summer - part I

I want to talk about two things that happened to me last summer. One is fairly simple to state, although difficult to talk about. That is that I had my first gay experience. The other is what might be called a giving-up of symbols. I'll tackle that one first.

Aspen has always been a symbol to me. I spent every summer there when I was in college and some winters when I would quit school. I learned to drink there, and smoke dope, and I just generally learned to love the good life of mountains and camping and going to bars every night and having a lot of male friends. You know, the good life.

So I went back to Aspen last summer, after an absence of two years. In those two years I had been a social worker, had gotten into women's liberation, had become aware that I was a class-chauvinist and discovered that all my friends were women and were gay and I had, in fact, fallen in love with one of those women. She went to Aspen with me. (See part II.)

What was really painful was seeing this town in the light of what I had become or what I knew. Maybe it was the pain of the wasted energy I'd put into a place that I could now see was the epitome of everything I hate.

The philosophy of Aspen is one of rugged individualism and a disdain for the establishment. No one wears ties or dresses much and everyone is "against the war." In other words, everyone is hip. Beautiful people. In still other words, everyone is hypocritical. They claim to be outside/above the mainstream of Ugly America but they break their backs to make money and live in a town with 3 or 4 blacks, a token Oriental and 4,000 white, upper middle-class, capitalist liberals.

Here are only 2 (of many) typical statements from a dinner conversation that we had. First Paul, our hostess's boyfriend, a carpenter/race-car driver (to Martha, the woman who had come with me) Paul: "If you aren't going to answer my question then you can go to your room."

And now Mike, a ski-instructor/laborer: "I'm concerned about myself first. I don't have any more privileges that anyone else. I don't owe anything to anyone but myself."

[This conversation smashed the "men-who-can-be-related-to" symbol. I always think there are men I can stand to be with and Paul and Mike were two. But the truth is that if women are serious and angry and together (and God forbid if they love one another) and most of all if women refuse to be laughed at, then men invariably can't stand it. There wasn't even much pain in seeing these men and their ugliness. It was just astonishing to me that I'd never before acted in such a way to bring it out. (Shuffle, shuffle).]

As for class, I really can't go into it. It's too large. Aspen has one class-privileged. It lives off skiers and upper middle-class tourists. It has no food stamp program. The poor people of Aspen are the freaks. Right. The politics of Aspen come together in a poster we saw of two male skiers on a lift, lighting a joint - the caption read "Ski Stoned." Isn't that just so "right on" as they say in the west?

So that was my vacation in Aspen. I don't want to go back, except to see the woman we stayed with, who might be realizing that she doesn't need Paul anymore. And to see her two daughters, who are 14 and 16 and met some real live lesbians when they visited me here and even liked them.

End Part I

What I Did Last Summer - part II

When I first thought about writing an article on becoming gay, my thoughts just naturally turned to the woman I've come to love and why I love her and things of that sort. And though that's really important to me, it's not something I want to discuss or think it's very fruitful to discuss here. What I do want to explore are the reasons why I finally turned exclusively to women for love and support, and how I've changed because of that decision.

In an article I wrote for AIAW some months ago, I talked about my (mostly negative) reactions to finding out that my roommate/best friend was gay. And how, in the 3 years since that painful time, I had come to accept lesbianism, though I was still heterosexual at the time I wrote the article.

I got into women's liberation later than most of my friends because I prided myself on not being a joiner, but really it was that I was afraid because I knew if I even just listened a little bit, there was no turning back. Remember that time? Sexism everywhere.

So becoming gay was just a matter of time after that. One day there were no men in my life anymore; and, more importantly, there were no men in my head. And what really makes me angry is that people say "How can you limit yourself that way? Lesbianism is so negative." Well, that's just bullshit. All of a sudden I have all these choices. I can love people that society said I couldn't. The Man was smart to pit woman against woman because he kept all the power that way. But those days are over and women who are able at last to love each other feel that power and self-affirmation because we don't need men for <u>anything</u> and we don't have to waste time dealing with (exceptional) men the way straight women do. And there will always be exceptional men, men who cloak their sexism in something you can't name but can feel, and it will <u>always</u> be a waste of time and energy to "deal" with them. Let the men who would struggle for a feminist consciousness struggle with each other.

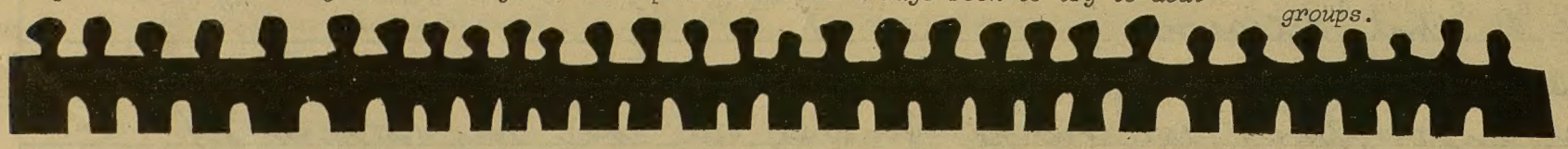
The natural extension of women's liberation is lesbianism. Maybe that's obvious. It surely is to me and that's why I fought quietly against involving myself in it. Because I knew it would be all or nothing and that I would have to give up being legitimized by men. And now that I'm there, now that I'm a lesbian, now that I don't relate to men anymore, it's not scary at all. That's really what I wanted to tell you, not to be afraid. That I've never felt so strong. The support I get from women is all I need. It's more than I need. I walk into Hamburg Inn with the woman/women I love and I not only don't care if people know I'm a lesbian, I <u>want</u> them to know. I want to grab every male bastard's lapel and say, "Listen, I love this woman, I sleep with this woman, we make love and WE DON'T NEED YOU! If you're not threatened by that, if you're not afraid, then you're crazy because we're making a revolution and, one way or another, you'll be on the casualty list."

SOME CRITICISM-

The following four articles are a result of much of our thinking concerning the new Women's Center which has opened on the University of Iowa campus. Many of us in the AIAW collective have become involved in the workshops and ongoing projects at the Women's Center, but it is a schizophrenic involvement for several reasons. On the one hand the Women's Center can be seen as very important because it is the single focal point for Women's Liberation related activity around. A new Women's Center implies enormous possibilities for meeting needs of women on all levels. On the other hand the givens of this Women's Center -- that it is a University-owned house, it is located on the University campus, and is involving at this stage the energies of mostly white, middle class women many of whom are university-related-- seems to limit that scope of possibilities to meeting the needs of white middle class women. Even if material needs of poor women are attempted to be met by service projects through the Women's Center (such as referral for free abortions, a free store, a job referral bureau, even a provision for Welfare liason information) it is probable that the women who actually will benefit by such projects will by and large be middle class.

Nevertheless we and many other women have been trying to struggle within the Women's Center. We see these articles as part of that struggle. One of our first priorities has always been to try to deal with these issues within the Women's Movement where we see class, race and sex bias. We believe the Women's Movement must be self-critical as it goes along.

We want to make several things clear about the purpose and nature of these articles. They are directed at ourselves and all women who have and may participate in the Women's Center, not at specific groups or individuals. Because of our experiences with the Women's Center so far we have had to ground these articles in those experiences; but we have attempted to analyse the meaning of these experiences on a broader scope. Furthermore, we believe it is possible that the issues here will relate to the struggles of other Women's Liberation and Women's Center groups.



Off

During a recent lesbian consciousness workshop at the new women's center in Iowa City, we discussed the pros and cons of a gay action: a room takeover within the women's center. Some gay women feel the need for a room for gay women exclusively, others feel such a room is unnecessary except for planned gay meetings.

To reform and compromise within the existing social system, the liberal argument, has a questionable effect on women who are trying to reject society's brainwashing and develop new standards of relating. It is questionable when liberals help obtain part of a demand by asking for it and getting it because of the power of the liberal within the establishment. It is questionable when the liberal compromises ideological positions for the sake of good relations with the establishment. It is questionable when the liberal argument, presently socially accepted, demoralizes women who do not work within the establishment, and women who do not have the option to work within the establishment.

The liberal position values individualism. If you can make it on your own, fight your own causes, you're to be respected.

The argument of whether or not the gay women should demand a room for themselves becomes more complex when you consider that the argument was amongst gay women with one group in favor of demanding a room and one group opposed to demanding it or thought we had no right to a room all the time. In this context conservatism or liberalism becomes more understandable because of the ways oppressed groups are taught to think of themselves, efface themselves, and undercut their own importance. Oppressors (those who hold the power) need to teach women not to demand things and to minimize their needs. This tends to make some oppressed people satisfied with token gains, accommodation, compromise, because we have been taught to not expect more. Even though we can understand the origin of liberal thinking, this does not make it a correct way of thinking.

One reason we are writing this article is because we believe there are correct and incorrect ways of thinking. For instance, class chauvinist, racist and sexist ways of thinking are incorrect in that they are unfair to many people. In this article the liberal voice speaks from a position that has not been adequately thought out. Our responses, we believe to be more rigorous and more correct.

LIBERAL VOICE:

There is no reason why just because you're (we're?) lesbians, you should have the priority or right to a room 24 hours a day when abortion counseling, abortion referral and the library and lounge relate to most women. The majority of women don't need this room.

The way the room assignments should be decided is to count how many women need a library or abortion counseling room and how many need a room for gay women. Then room assignments should be made so that the greatest number of women benefit from the rooms.

THE ANSWER TO THAT IS:

This position completely ignores the rights of the minority. It is the tyranny of the majority. There is no magical quality about majority that makes it more truthful, right, or the better way to live. Those considerations aren't determined by number. The number of people who have a need should not be pitted against the number of people who have another need and the group with the most people in it be determined to have the most need This way of doing things says nothing of the need of the individuals in the groups and completely ignores the needs of the individuals in the smaller group, just because they are in the smaller group. If this were the way of doing things the needs of minorities ould never be considered.

Instead all needs, when stated, should be considered valid. If Third World women who relate to the women's center, come in and say that they need a room within the women's center, then it's not for white women to rule on that need because we don't have similar experience.

LIBERAL VOICE:

If gay women want a place for themselves why don't they demand that the university give them a house, or chip in and rent a place?

THE ANSWER TO THAT IS:

The women's center, if it is for all women, is also for gay women. The women who asked the university for the house that is now the women's center are working within the system to bring about reform. They have the privilege to be in the system that many women don't have. They can compromise on demands made because they find individual solutions to meet their needs. They can suggest renting a house for gay women becuase they have money to do that.

The liberal argument of fighting for your own cause (in this case a place for gay women) is, again, ignoring the women with no rights to make demands on institutions. It is the obligation of women who work within the system to make demands for women with no such option.

"Riding on the coattails" of women who refuse to give up their power and privileges is not lazy, or unfair. Women who have the privilege of being listened to have an obligation to use it. Individualistic solutions don't work for women who have no individual rights. That sort of thinking keeps poor women, Third World women and gay women voiceless.

When these women say they have a need that isn't being met, it is absolutely the responsibliity of women who have power to help meet those needs to do so, individualistic bullshit aside.

LIBERAL VOICE:

Don't get excited. I'm listening, but I disagree with what you're saying. (The liberal position also values objectivity. By remaining rational and in control at all times. The liberal can always recall and use a theory learned from a book.)

THE ANSWER TO THAT IS:

Emotion is constantly pounced on in women's liberation meetings, a sign of instability, not to be listened to until stated calmly. Liberalshit! Women react with frustration, anguish, shouts moans when they are not listened to, misunderstood, and told they aren't feeling what they say they're feeling. Their feelings are valid, not to be negated by any objectivity, or made to seem ridiculous.

Women have various experiences, obviously, depending on their life styles. For a woman who is getting a middleclass, privileged education to have the audacity to define the form (speak calmly, quiety--ie, ladylike) of expression women in other life styles use is anti-everything women getting together means. It is imposing a privileged (not necessarily desirable) standard on other women.

LIBERAL VOICE:

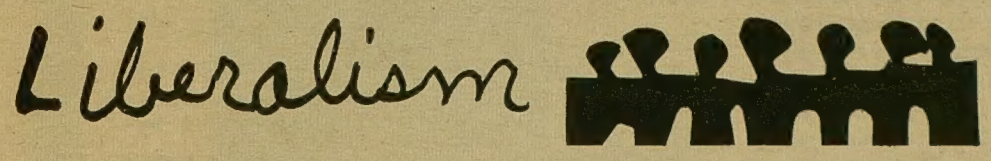
I don't plan to relate to this room because there are too many dangers of having my career ruined by some other university women seeing me here, also the univer-

sity, which I'm attending to get my Ph D. is providing this house, and ...

THE ANSWER TO THAT IS:

Then don't. But there are gay women who aren't concerned with careers and reputations, there are gay women who don't even have that option. Those women want a room where they can have the option not to relate to straight women. Many gay women aren't in the privileged position of having an individual career, they come from a crowded mixed living situation with no opportunity to make it on their own. When the needs of gay women are considered, their individual needs are melded into the whole. There is no room for individualism when gains for the gay minority are strived for. The needs of those women with the least options must be met by the group first. These needs may seem insignificant to women who take for granted that all women are having their basic needs met, such as women who have individual careers.

Individualism also demands a woman justify her needs, justify why she deserves to have those needs met, justtify her existence.



What need do lesbians have that aren't being met by the women's center in general? Aren't we all women, and isn't that our most important reason for coming together? We are women first and lesbians second.

If we as gay women demand a room , this will unnecessarily divide us as women. If we have a room gay women will spend all their time there and not relate to the straight women and that will just increase the differences between us. How will straight women understand if we don't relate to them and let them see what we're really like. We must all share this house.

We are all women and if we can just stick together we will succeed. But if we're always fighting with each other and can't agree on what we want--even us: all gay women--how can we succeed at anything.

Why should we, what gives us the right to take a room? If we do and don't let straight women in it, then we are oppressing them the way they have oppressed us.

THE ANSWER TO THAT IS:

Yes, we are all women , but within that group there are different subgroups and it is no use ignoring them. There are class differences, racial differences and different sexual orientations. Third world women and working class women have an experience that I haven't had and they have been oppressed not just as women but as workingclass and Third World people. That separate oppression like the oppression of gay women is something that each subgroup feels the need to discuss with women of like experience, partly because white, middle class, straight women have been involved in oppressing these minority groups.

Why should the getting together of minority groups of women be seen as divisive. All of a sudden this is the divisive act , but why aren't the weeks and months spent talking in one large group of women where gayness, or racism or class were not discussed, considered just as divisive. The majority never deals w th the minority unless forced to. That is one reason it is necessary for the minority group to get together--in order to confront the rest of the women.

The forming of the gay cell here last year wasn't a divisive act. It helped us understand and accept our selves better; it gave us pride as gay women; and it gave us the strength and support to confront the rest of women's liberation about lesbianism. I would say that the gay cell reduced differences and divisiveness. Even though it was closed to straight women, it didn't isolate us from them, rather it reduced isolation of gay women.

That we must all stick together without regard to difference, be concerned with straight women and their needs, implies that we are concerned with everyone's needs but our own. It sounds to me like we don't think ourselves very important. Certainly it is good to concern ourselves with the needs of straight women but not to the exclusion of our own. One thing is sure, no one else will concern themselves with the needs of gay women except gay women. And if we are off paying sole attent tion to the needs of others then no one will speak for us.

What would we succeed at if we did manage to bandaid our differences? We would succeed at the one, little, watered-down thing that we could all agree on. And how much good would that do? I doubt if it would bring any lasting changes.

It seems useless to lament differences in a group this way. They are there, we all know they are there and ignoring them or lamenting them does nothing to eliminate them. If there are differences, let them surface so that they can be worked with. If unity is a goal then covering up differences isn't the road to it.

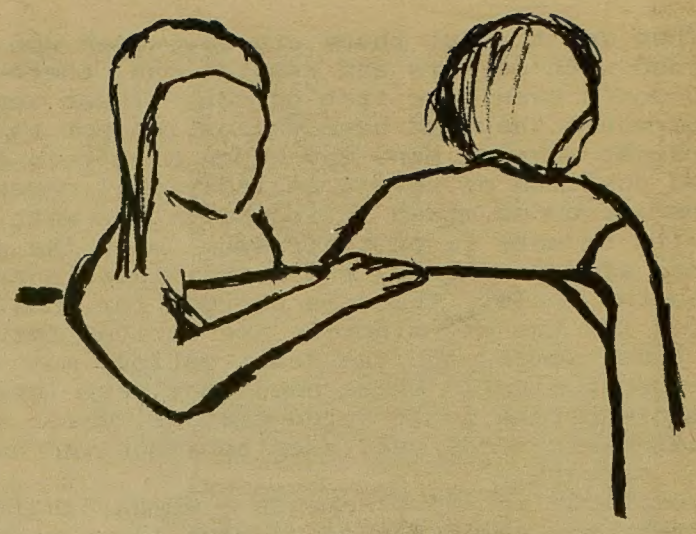
That is, assuming that unity is something to be strived for. The unity of gay women I would say is a goal that I am willing to struggle for. Many times, however, the unity rap has been given to women in very liberal ways and each time we bought it, we got sold down the river. Men in the new left intone it and when they do it means "sit quietly baby and the whole group (meaning males, who are not sitting quietly) will take care of your needs." Bullshit. Anti-war people say "Let's all stick together and end the war first and then we'll get to you." Bullshit, again.

Unity just for unity's sake isn't useful. It accomplishes nothing by itself. It must have a politically valid base in order to be meaningful. I am not concerned with unity with groups whose politics are racist, class chauvinist or anti-gay.

The argument that gay women having a room would be turning the tables of oppression and that then gay women would be oppressing straight women fails to consider a lot of things. It is an argument that is used alot by males: "You are oppressing me and being unfair to me because you won't let me in you women's center or your meetings." These statements are based in the idea that if the oppressed obtain any gains they are either taking them away from the majority or oppressing the majority. They say that equality is oppressive. This ignores what has gone before. It is true that in order for there to be equality the majority may have to give up some things, but that is because the majority had all things to begin with and that is unequal. There is an analogy of a foot race that is helpful in understanding this. There are two runners and they have run 100 yds, one with a 100 pound weight her back and the other with no weight. The problem is how to make the race equal for the next 100 yds. Merely taking the weight from the one woman would not do it because it does nothing to change the distance she has fallen behind during the first 100 yds because of the weight. The only way to bring them to the equal positions they were when they started is for one woman to take on the weight of the other for the next 100 yds.

That there is not one room in this whole town for gay women to get together in is unequal. That the women's center give one room to gay women begins to equalize that.

Counseling.....?

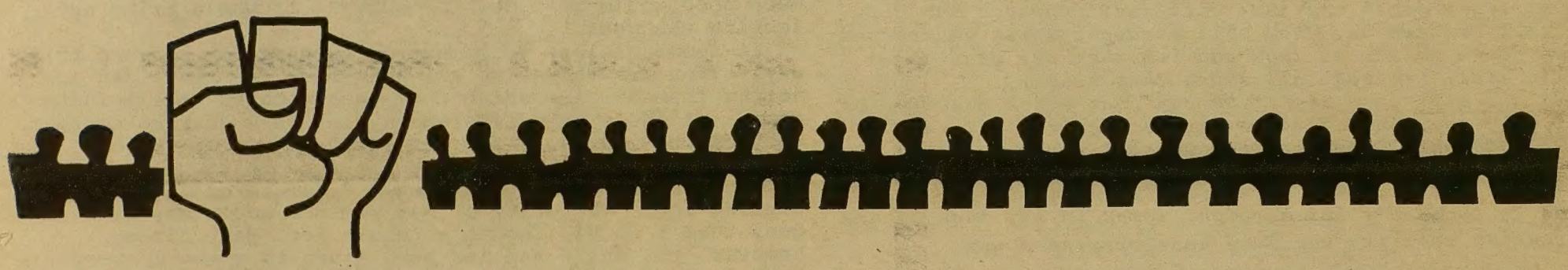


When I heard that a group of women was interested in starting a women's counseling group to work out of the women's center, I was very skeptical. The word "counseling" freaked me out. It conjured up all those thoughts in my head about how so many women had been messed over by counselors and therapists. But at the same time I thought that it might be worth having some better alternative for women who wanted to talk out their hassles with someone besides their friends. More important, it's a good situation to begin helping women see that their problems are not personal, but a result of the way this society is set up and the way people are socialized to function in it.

I attended the second organizational meeting of the counseling group because I wanted to see how the group was coming together, how they were going to approach the work of "counseling" women and mainly because there were no other gay women in the group and I wanted us to be represented.

The women who attended the meeting were a combination of political women who've been involved in the women's center, women generally interested in counseling, and several professional counselors (or students in the university counseling program.) A lot of the discussion revolved around how women could be trained to be competent counselors of other women. That whole idea seems to perpetuate the concept that professionals have all the correct information and techniques. I have such a basic mistrust of male-dominated, capitalist professions (especially psychology, psychiatry) that I think it may be justifiable for women to get together and start from scratch in learning how to deal with our problems. We need to have confidence in our own perceptions of problems. We should be able to help and understand women who have hassles -- learning from our own experience with drugs, being gay, economic problems, marriage, divorce, kids, loneliness and any other situation we'll come up against in helping one another. I believe it is important to start to work in groups to help solve these problems in order to break down the counsellor-counsellee relationship which has so much power vested in one person. I feel very strongly that gay women should deal with problems of gay women, drug problems should be handled by freaks and street people, etc. As a gay woman, I know I'd have very little to give to a woman who was having problems in her marriage. That doesn't mean that we can't have any understanding of each other's hassles; we should struggle to understand each other's problems. We should be especially careful not to fuck over women whose situations and lives we can't or don't understand -- such as white women counselling third world women, straight women with gay women, middle class women counselling working class and poor women.

Also, it's imperative that we look at all problems people have through a political perspective. There are certain bad problems people have that we can do very little about besides give them as much emotional and financial support as possible and continue to build a revolution.



Learning to listen to anger inside yourself, to show that anger, is a liberating experience. It is legitimate, self-affirming emotion. We've learned as women to feel our anger against males and their all-pervasive system which we have had to suffer under and now are revolting against. We have realized that we have been socialized into a role of tolerance and understanding with no back-talk -- a socialization that the oppressor must perpetuate because it is the necessary condition to allow him to exercize his privileges at our expense.

But anger that women feel for other women -- just as legitimate, because some women have either learned or simply been born into positions which oppress other women -- is harder to come to grips with. We know that the middle, privileged class exploits the working and lower, oppressed classes. We know white women oppress third world women. We know straight women oppress lesbians. But the natural anger at the antagonism from those oppressing women is often looked on with horror. Aren't we all women with the same needs, the same goals, the same problems? Can't we work together in harmony?

No. It's a lie to say that just because we are all women we share the same needs, goals and problems. There are enormous differences among us, and we must struggle over those differences. And the only way to do that is to listen to the anger we, perhaps unwittingly but very definitely, provoke in other women.

I think learning to co-opt yourself by moderating your anger is basically a middle class lesson. Growing up in a middle class family I was always taught that I must above all be considerate, to compromise, to speak calmly and rationally under any strain of hurt or outrage. Angry outbursts were labled a "breakdown of communication" -- they created rifts that were unbridgeable, and it was my fault.

Recently I have seen all of these dynamics of anger and negative response to anger coming into play during meetings concerning the newly opened Women's Center here in Iowa City. A series of workshops were planned with various groups of women working on workshops in Daycare, Counselling and Consciousness Raising, Economic Class and the Women's Movement, Abortion and Birth Control , Lesbianism, HEW agitation for equal rights and pay for women employees of the University, and Women's Skills and Studies. All of these interest groups met jointly to coordinate the workshops and explain what they had planned for their group's workshop. We had never met together before and many of us hadn't met each other. We were at a lot of different places in our heads. So as a group we were pretty diverse (although no third world women were involved, an oftentimes recurring condition of Women's Liberation's lack of relevance to third world women).

What happened was really classic in terms of group dynamics and the workings of anger vs. moderation. Probably any one of several of the groups could have caused it, but the Abortion and Birth Control group spoke first and that sparked a really essential conflict. They had arranged for a Family Planning person to speak at their workshop about birth control. To many women in the large group who were working or lower class, or else had some knowledge of the way Family Planning has fucked over poor women, the idea was plainly classist and insensitive to poor women -- definitely nothing they would care to relate to, and therefore exclusive to the needs of middle class women. This perspective was pointed out by a woman who had worked in Welfare, it seemingly had no effect, and soon several working class women were angry and shouting because of the offensiveness of the original idea and the apparent inflexibility of the group of middle class women who had planned the workshop. The distaste of most of the women there for this angry outburst was evident; someone placatingly said, "There's no need to get angry about it." And two women retorted, "What do you mean she has no need to get angry!"

Anger is a form of communication. We must learn to listen to women's anger, accept it as a real, valid message that we must reexamine the assumptions and results of what we have said or done. We must learn that anger is a result, not a cause. And we must learn to abandon the paths of action we have taken which are shown, by the angry responses of women directly affected by those actions, to be classist, racist, or homosexist.

And afterward! Those of us who knew the women who had gotten angry were made again and again to justify that anger. It *broke down* communication -- it *created* a rift -- it *put people off*. The anger did that? Oh no. The responsibility lies on the women who were class antagonistic. *They* created the rift, *they* put people off because of their insensitivity to the expressed needs of poor women in that situation.

I'm trying to remember
something I quit before it ended
so I can rid myself
of this image
of clinging to corpses
of groups and relationships
ashes of feeling
analysis of situations that
don't exist anymore

I'm not sure
if this period of ending
is more complete
or if the immediacy
dements the perspective
on everything that I
can't let go of
as it dies in my hand
and
I feel humiliated
for not knowing in time
that things are changing
I feel foolish for
trying insanely to preserve
a relationship that never existed
a direction that no one was going
a routine of nothing
to do
arymore

Not Expecting

It's not that
I hunger
for the salt of our
essential sweats.
There is no heat-smell
of two hot stones
pressing each other in my belly.
It's not even that.

But I sense that the presence
of your liquid
fingers in my bed
would unclamp my night-tense jaw,
uncurl my tongue,
and remind my skin
of the greenness of sheets.

To sleep
cupped in the arc of your body
(the way children do
and call it "spoon fashion")
my woman-shape
echoing
your woman-shape
and your breath near:
That is my image.

29 december 1970
after 9 pm
you make me wish to write long pages
full of shit
about being/loving/creating
i feel as if right now i could scream of
beauty
from the hills -- your cosmic touch
should
be talked about because it is within us
all
to be caressed that way
i LOVE you what more can be
said
and through you all people are loved
by me

more
those little communal houses (or the
great
big ones) we talked about
some day we'll see them
together and i will touch your
soul's temple also and you mine -- not
out of
the need to get physical
but from the need only we
two can feel
how i love you
brown-eyed one
love spelled the same but meaning
spiritually much more
meaning that we realize the
creative
forces to be energy and that
we as a
part of that must
come together
come
together
wow -- there are tears in my
laughter

by Ericka Huggins

BILL'S-OLE-LADY

Hey is that you
Bill's-ole-lady
sashaying down the street
brillo frizzies flying copper in the sun
yee-owling
marchin' off with all those war-painted ladies
to smash the state?

You never looked so tall before
five-foot Bill's-ole-lady

You were the only woman I called friend
three years ago in San Francisco
You and me, we played hostess
to the revolution games theyfought
in your Fulton Street parlor

They liked Polynesian chicken and tacos with/
their tactics
So we stewed the birds
and ground the beef
How clever they are, I thought
How happy we are we said

Hey, is that you, Bill's-ole-lady?

I catch your eye
You dash through a street-full of our friends
Throw strong arms around my heart
and whisper
"My name is Judith."

by Karen Kearns —LNS

AMAZONSPEAKS

BOOK OF POEMS

Susan Griffin's first book of poems has been published by Shameless Hussy Press. This poem is included in the collection, and we like it very much. The book is entitled Dear Sky, and can be ordered at $.60 per copy ($1 to institutions) from 1939 Cedar St, Berkeley, Calif.

FEELING RIGHTEOUS

The whole thing
came clear to me today
just the way it really is,
man on the top,
woman fighting from the bottom,
and I feel righteous.
I am hearing Nina Simone
sing out her song
you can't keep this woman down
and I feel
righteous.
the sound goes right through
my spine
and down to
my toes
and I am
laughing
deep down inside myself because
I feel righteous.
there's nothing
hazy about it now.
the whole thing is
perfectly clear.
there's no way
to keep a righteous woman down.
we will be free; my heart
is free today
and you can hear it sing
the way we're all going to sing
because
we're all going to sing everyday
we're going to sing
every righteous,
goddamn day.

FLASH: The Fourth World . . . new paper: #6 yr. . . priority . . . third world women

. . BOX 8997, OAKLAND, CAL.

NEW LESBIAN PAPER

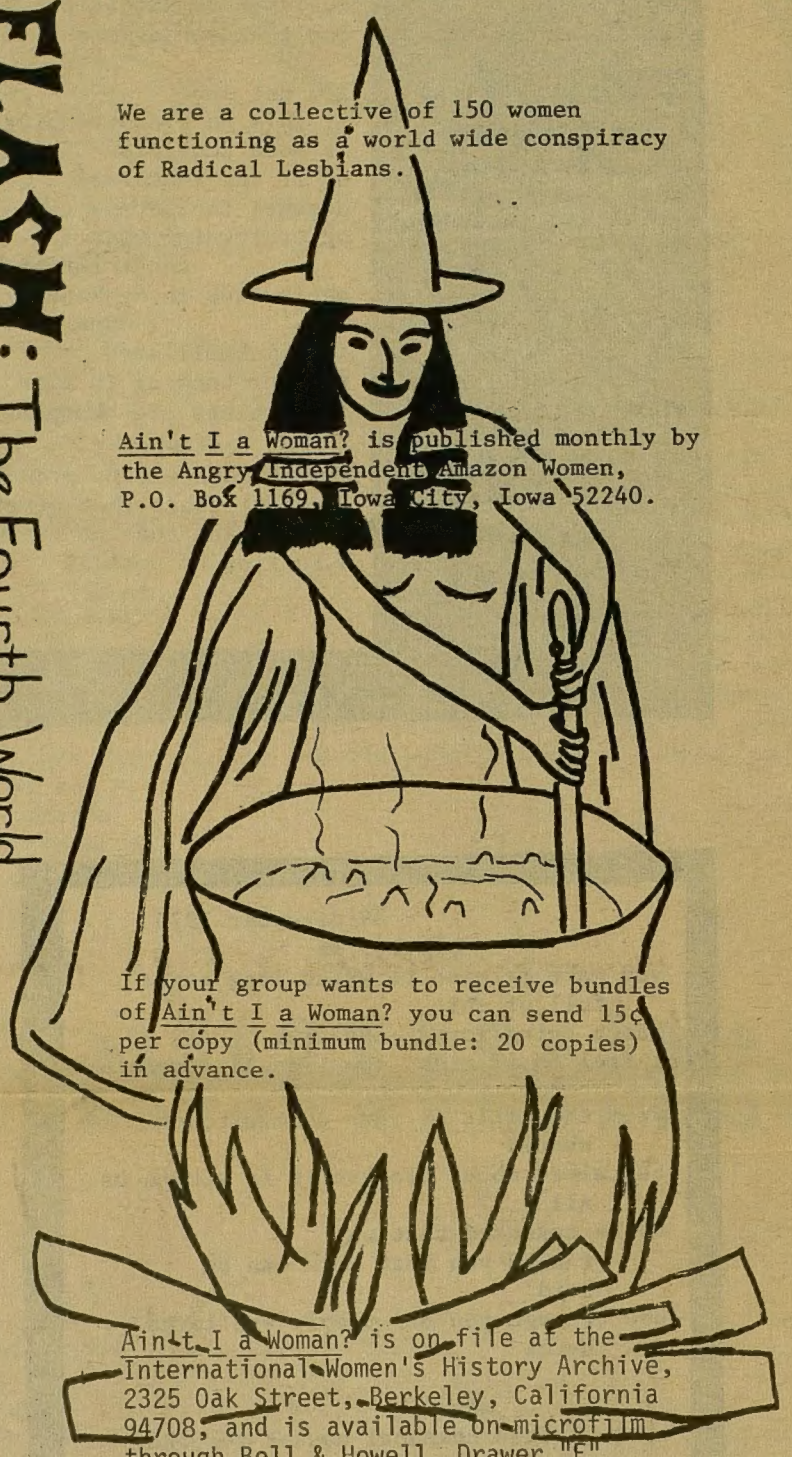
The AIAW collective looks forward to the first issue of a new Lesbian newspaper from Washington, D.C. Sample copies will be mailed to each subscriber of AIAW.

AIN'T I A WOMAN?

sub. $5.00
inst. $20.00

P.O. box 1169
iowa city, ia.
52240

We are a collective of 150 women functioning as a world wide conspiracy of Radical Lesbians.



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SOJOURNER TRUTH,
"THE LIBYAN SIBYL."

"That man over there say that a woman needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helped me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me a best place ... And ain't I a women? Look at me. Look at my arm! I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me... And ain't I a women? I could work as much and eat as much as a man when I could get it, and bear the lash as well... And ain't I a woman? I have borned thirteen children and seen them most all sold off into slavery. And when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard... And ain't I a woman?"

Sojurner Truth: Speech before the Woman's Rights Convention at Akron, Ohio in 1851.

The cover was drawn by a twelve year old girl, and we thank her very much for letting us use it.